buckles, and the like. From it have been carved vases, bells, resonant stones, ornamental screens, and artificial flowers. Some of its former functions have dropped into abeyance, but it is still greatly valued.

Chinese lapidaries have shown marked skill in working in jade. They have also applied their art to agates, rock crystals, and other stones.

CERAMICS

Another characteristic feature of Chinese aesthetic life has been ceramics. In one phase, porcelain, China long led the rest of the world and in common parlance China and porcelain ware have been almost synonymous. Yet, compared with the Occident, the Chinese potters did not become masters of their craft until comparatively late. Not until the T'ang and Sung did they deserve high rank as artists. In this phase the ancient Mediterranean civilizations were far ahead of the contemporary China of the Chou and the Han.

Something of the history of the potter's art in China has been narrated in earlier chapters. Since, however, it there appeared in piecemeal fashion, a brief recapitulation may help to show the main features oi the development and the outstanding characteristics of Chinese ceramics.

What is probably the earliest extant pottery known in China belongs to the Yang Shao and related cultures—that neolithic civilization which was on the edge of the bronze age. What may be the oldest of this earthenware is well shaped, thoroughly baked, painted in various designs and colors, and seems to be akin to forms widely scattered through neolithic Asia. It is quite impos-

sible yet to determine exact dates, but one estimate declares that it cannot be later than 3000 B.C. Along with this painted pottery are remnants of a grey ware of coarser texture and less skilled workmanship and of a type which persisted into the Han. There is also a hard, black pottery. Fragments of a white, hard, carved pottery have been discovered which probably belong to the Shang. The surviving pottery of Chou times is not of particularly high quality.

With the Han, glazed ware began to appear, the art of manufacturing it possibly having been transmitted frona the Western